

The Confessing Movement

within The United Methodist Church



Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord!

January -

March 2011

Vol. 17, Issue 1

We Confess

RECOVERY OF A CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

The Denman Lectures were a featured part of the 2011 Congress on Evangelism January 4-7, 2011 at Myrtle Beach, SC. The lecturer was Dr. George G. Hunter, III, Distinguished Professor of Evangelism and Church Growth at Asbury Theological Seminary. His topic was "Recovery of a Contagious Christian Movement."

Dr. Hunter noted that The United Methodist Church (UMC) since 1968 has become less Methodist and more "mainstream." The result has been forty years of continuous membership decline. People don't want to join a church that is not sure of what it believes. In contrast, early Methodists experienced explosive growth. Within John Wesley's lifetime, Methodism in Great Britain grew from zero to over 144,000 members. During Francis Asbury's lifetime, American Methodism grew from 1,200 to over 244,000 members. Even as late as the 1920s, American Methodism was sponsoring over 2,500 foreign missionaries. Today that number is less than 250. Gradually the UMC has become less of a movement and more of an institution.

Hunter noted that the current Call-to-Action Committee (CTA) is proposing steps that might slow down the Church's decline, but those steps are not likely to transform the Church from an institution into a movement. The CTA largely ignores American Methodism's vastly changed national context, especially the following factors: Today America is

(Continued on page 2)

TWO CLERGYMEN NAMED UNITED METHODISTS OF THE YEAR

FOR THE COURAGEOUS SERVICE TO THE POOREST OF GOD'S CHILDREN, THE REV. SAM DIXON AND THE REV. CLINTON RABB WERE HONORED POSTHUMOUSLY AS UNITED METHODISTS OF THE YEAR. BOTH MEN DIED OF INJURIES SUFFERED AFTER BEING BURIED IN THE RUBBLE OF A COLLAPSED HOTEL FOLLOWING THE JANUARY

12TH EARTHQUAKE IN HAITI. DIXON WAS A LEADER OF THE UNITED METHODIST COMMITTEE ON RELIEF (UMCOR). RABB, A CLERGY MEMBER OF THE SOUTHWEST TEXAS CONFERENCE, WAS A STAFF MEMBER OF THE GENERAL BOARD OF GLOBAL MINISTRIES.

In This Issue:

- Recovery of a Contagious Christian Movement
- Two Clergymen Named United Methodists of the Year
- MEF Must Change!
- Do Christians & Muslims Worship the Same God?
- Remember The Creed

(Continued from Page 1)

one of the world's largest mission fields; it includes approximately 180 million pre-Christian people. With the fading of the Enlightenment, people are seeking spiritual experiences rather than reasons for faith. The U.S. is a multi-cultural society with over 50 million citizens who do not speak English. In order to appeal to the unreached, the UMC must overcome its timidity about reaching out. Currently we have a "Don't Ask-Don't Tell" philosophy when it comes to religion. Yet, at this point in history, by the grace of God, there are a vast number of secular groups in America more receptive to Christianity than ever before. Currently no mainline denomination is getting its fair share of this harvest.

Dr. Hunter proposed some steps that would be necessary if the UMC hopes to reach the unreached and become a movement again:

- The UMC must create a culture of honesty and transparency, being willing to discuss our primary problem, which is sin.
- We must recover Wesleyan theology, stressing the supreme importance of Scripture. Though the *Book of Discipline* refers to Scripture as "the true rule and guide for faith and practice," most Methodists do not regard the Bible as their "normative authority." Many liberals have elevated experience above Scripture. Currently there is theological anarchy in the UMC.
- The UMC must recover the leadership of the laity. In addition, we must find a modern equivalent for the Wesleyan class-meetings which were the "sinew" of Methodism. These groups must do more than just study the Bible and offer fellowship. They must be serious about sin, repentance, new birth, and accountability. In early Methodism, most conversions took place in the class-meetings.
- The UMC must meet our culture where it is, offering culturally relevant presentations. We must remember that human beings are "basically emotional creatures who sometimes think." We must engage in radical outreach, imitating Jesus who reached out to people like Samaritans, tax collectors, and soldiers who had been written off by the Jewish Temple. Institutions become movements when "hopeless" people are reached.



Dr. Hunter used as a positive example a thriving Baptist church in Leesburg, Florida. This church was transformed when it made a basic decision "to spend its life befriending and inviting all the folks that other churches were not interested in."•

"The gospel is worth living for; it is also worth dying for. Persecution has never, and will never, kill the church."

(Benjamin Kwashi,
Anglican Bishop of Nigeria)



MEF MUST BE CHANGED!

The Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) is our church's primary source of funding for our thirteen seminaries and our pre-ministerial students. Currently about 75 percent of this apportionment goes to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. 75 percent of that 75 percent goes directly to the seminaries. The other 25 percent (of the 75 percent) remains with the General Board for administrative support. The remaining 25 percent of the apportionment stays with the annual conferences where it is collected. This portion provides direct support for United Methodist students in all approved seminaries.

Currently there are about 40 non-United Methodist seminaries on the approved list. Recently Bishop Will Willimon admitted that the University Senate, which approves non-UM seminaries, is attempting to reduce that number. He acknowledged that part of the reason was because the thirteen United Methodist seminaries "need students."

Asbury Theological Seminary, a non-UM seminary, is currently educating at least one out of every seven UM pastors-to-be. Yet Asbury receives no direct funding from the UMC.

Contrast Asbury's situation with

that of an official UM seminary—Claremont in California. Claremont received \$840,000 in UM funding last year but graduated only ten UM students. United Methodism's Gammon Seminary received \$816,000 but graduated only four UM students. The MEF has gradually changed from a fund designed primarily to train future UM pastors into a subsidy (institutional bail-out) for UM seminaries that are not able to attract students. Is this really how United Methodists want their contributions to be used?

General Conference could provide a powerful corrective by changing the MEF formula from 75/25 to 50/50. Then most of the 50 percent of MEF funds would provide direct support for the seminaries, and the other 50 percent would support UM seminary students at whatever approved seminary they chose to attend.

Such a change would force the thirteen official UM seminaries to explore why so many UM students choose Asbury, and then perhaps imitate some of Asbury's strengths. Such a change would also help financially-pressed UM students who could attend a non-UM seminary much nearer to their homes and at much less cost. •

In The News...

JUDICIAL COUNCIL TO DECIDE ELECTION MATTER

On February 12, the United Methodist Judicial Council, at the request of the Council of Bishops, will meet to interpret the meaning of Division Two, Section VI, Paragraph 35, Article IV, passed by the 2008 General Conference. The bishops want clarification about the voting eligibility requirements for local pastors, especially an interpretation of “two consecutive years under appointment” and whether the requirements apply to provisional as well as full-time local pastors.



A MATTER OF SENSITIVITY

(By Dr. Bill Bouknight with quotations from Associated Press)

In June, 2010, Annie Chambers Caddell moved into the historically African-American Brownsville neighborhood near Summerville, SC. Ms. Caddell is white. Soon after moving in, she began flying a Confederate flag over her house. She sees the flag as an important reminder of her Southern heritage. Most of her neighbors resent the flag because they see it as a symbol of Southern oppression of blacks.

Her neighbor, James Patterson, says that her display of the flag is insensitive. “I know she has a legal right to do that on her property. But just because it’s legally right doesn’t make it morally right,” said Patterson, who is black. “You can put up what you want, but if this was a Jewish community and someone moved in and started flying a swastika flag, there would be a lot of hell raised about that as well.”

Mr. Patterson is correct, and he expresses the exact reason that Muslim leaders in New York City should not build an Islamic Center adjacent to Ground Zero. Religious groups, more than any others, should be alert and responsive to matters of sensitivity.

DON'T ASK/DON'T TELL

On December 18, 2010 Congress voted to repeal the Don't Ask/Don't Tell ban on openly homosexual military personnel. A Pentagon report issued before the vote stated that “service members will not be required to change their personal views and religious beliefs. They must, however, continue to respect and co-exist with others who may hold different views and beliefs.”

Is Proselytizing Okay?

By Dr. Bill Bouknight

The dictionary defines a proselyte as a convert. So, should a Christian seek to proselytize or convert persons to the Christian faith? Most Christians would answer yes. Matthew 28:19 is clear enough: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..."

The question becomes more complicated if a Christian tries to convert someone from another religion to Christianity, though St. Paul never hesitated in his efforts to make Christians out of Jews.

A few months ago Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi upset some Italians by urging them to convert to Islam during his three-day visit to that predominantly Roman Catholic country. But neither the Pope nor the Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi registered an objection. One wonders what the response would be if an American political leader were to travel to a predominantly Muslim country and urge people to convert to Christianity.

Some of my liberal friends are in a conundrum about this matter. On the one hand, they don't like proselytizing of any kind because they believe that all major religions are equally valid paths to God. (This is the Claremont Seminary heresy.) But they are hesitant to criticize any Muslim, even Gadhafi, because that might conflict with their narrative that the Western world, especially America and Israel, are causing most of the world's conflicts and the Muslims are simply reacting to Western faults.

We evangelicals have no problem with anyone proselytizing as long as it's done with freedom,

honesty, and in a non-manipulative way. All persons are created in the image of God;

therefore they deserve our respect. We dare to believe that Christianity can and should compete with all religions in the worldwide marketplace of ideas. And we believe that the best Christian evangelism does not focus on criticizing other religions but in lifting up Christ. When St. Paul visited Athens (Acts 17) with its cornucopia of gods, he did not attack any of those false gods. Instead, he just presented Jesus Christ to the Athenians as the "unknown God."

Should a Christian proselytize? Frankly, we have no choice. If we believe that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (as John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 plainly state); and, if we believe that a person's

decision to receive Christ could change his eternal destiny from hell to heaven, we would have to hate or care absolutely nothing for that person in order to refrain from sharing Christ with him, if he is willing to hear the gospel. So, as St.

Paul urged Timothy, "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season...do the work of an evangelist." (2 Tim. 4:2,5)

The great bishop and missionary-theologian Lesslie Newbigin once declared that there have been only two real heresies in the history of the Christian church: sharing Christ without offering the cup of cold water, or offering the cup of cold water without sharing Christ. •

"There have been only two real heresies in the history of the Christian church: sharing Christ without offering the cup of cold water, or offering the cup of cold water without sharing Christ."

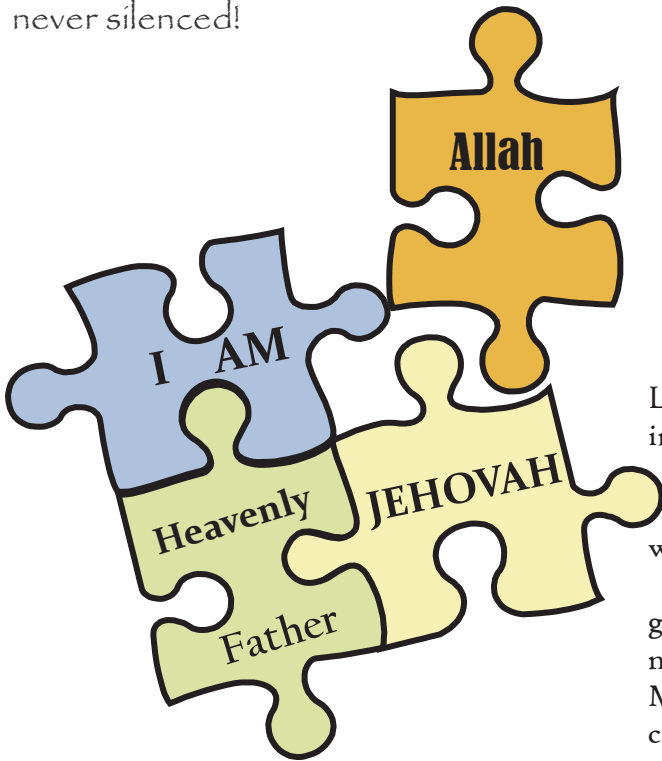
(Bishop Lesslie Newbigin)



WE WILL NEVER BE SILENCED UNLESS...

the United Methodist people stop supporting The Confessing Movement. With your support we will continue to lift up Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord. With your support we will continue to “contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 1) With your support we will continue to call our denomination to rediscover its classical, orthodox, Wesleyan faith tradition.

There are several ways you can contribute. Go to The Confessing Movement website at www.confessingumc.org. In the top right corner click on “donate.” Directions will be given. A second way is to phone The Confessing Movement office at 317-356-9729 and make a donation via your credit card. A third way is to mail a check to The Confessing Movement office at 7995 East 21st Street, Indianapolis, IN 46219. Thanks for making sure that the truth is never silenced!



DO CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS WORSHIP THE SAME GOD? (From “The Apologetics Study Bible,” Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007)

This is a difficult question, especially in the English language. Linguistically, anyone who uses the term “God” is basically saying the same thing: They are referring to the uncreated Creator of the universe. In this fashion, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, and all others are referring to the Lord of the universe when they use the term “God.”

With regard to Islam, the similarities of Allah and Jehovah are greater for two reasons: (1) Islam embraces monotheism, which means “one God,” just as Judaism and Christianity do; and, (2) Muhammad used many of the people cited in the Bible when he created the Qur’an, such as Noah (Surah 6:84), Jacob (Surah 2:132), and Jesus (Surah 3:45-47).

However, ultimately this is not an issue of vocabulary; it is an issue of definition. The Allah of the Qur’an is described and defined in a way that clearly shows Muhammad was not presenting the same God. The god of Islam is remote, and not intimate (Surah 112). Allah does not have a son (Surah 2:116), is not a Trinity (Surah 5:72), and does not love unconditionally (Surah 8:53). In Islam, Jesus is simply a prophet, and emphatically is not the Son of God (Surah 5:72), and the angel Gabriel is the Holy Spirit (Surah 2:193).

Remember, when Muhammad was alive (A.D. 570-632), the Bible was already in its complete canonical form. Muhammad, living just over 700 miles south of Jerusalem, knew the Bible and rejected it. Instead, he created a system that changed the nature and attributes of God, but still used the name.

In summation, Islam rejects the fatherhood of God, the divinity of the Son, and the person of the Holy Spirit. You cannot change the nature of the God of the Bible without changing the “god” you are presenting. It is not the same God. •

Timely Tips From Methodism's Past

Drs. James and Molly Scott of the Arkansas Conference have rendered a significant contribution to the entire Wesleyan family with their book entitled "Restoring the Wesleyan Class-Meeting (Provident Publishing: Dallas, 2008)." They contend that the Wesleyan class-meeting was the heart of the Wesleyan movement. Participation in a class-meeting was required for early Methodists. A class generally consisted of about 12 persons whose goal was "to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins." The meetings were usually led by laypersons that had been appointed and trained by a pastor. The weekly meetings lasted for one hour and usually took place in homes. The meetings included Bible study, prayer, singing, and opportunities for all participants to offer words of testimony and accountability. When class-meetings began to disappear in the 1920s and 1930s, the Methodist movement began to decline. The Sunday School movement increased even as the class-meeting decreased. The two organizations are very different. The primary aim of Sunday School is education, but the principal goal of the class-meeting is personal salvation and

transformation. In early Methodism, more conversions took place in class-meetings than at the preaching events.

The Scotts are convinced that a recovery of the class-meeting is essential for the renewal of Methodism. The current Call-to-Action Committee of The United Methodist Church seems to agree. It has listed small-groups as one sign of a vital church.

Research by the Scotts also sheds light on the current controversy about whether or not a local pastor should retain discretionary authority concerning a person's readiness for church membership. This was not a matter of debate in early Methodism.

The first books of Discipline (usually called Books of Doctrine and Discipline) were printed in a question-and-answer format, with answers usually given by John Wesley himself. Question # 3 in the 1787 edition was: "How shall we prevent improper persons from insinuating themselves into the church?"

Mr. Wesley gave these two answers:

1. Give tickets (to the love feasts) to none until they are recommended by a (class) leader with whom they have met at

least six months on trial.

2. Read the rules to them the first time they meet.

These standards were still in force over 100 years later. The 1900 edition of the Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church included the following paragraph: "In order to prevent improper persons from gaining admission into the church, and in order to exercise the power of godly administration and discipline, let great care be taken in receiving persons on Probation, and let no one be enrolled as a Probationer unless he gives satisfactory evidence of an earnest desire to be saved from his sins, and to enjoy the fellowship of God's people; and, let the pastor and class leader see that all persons on Probation be early made acquainted with the doctrines, rules, and regulations of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

The Scotts have provided guidance for a 17-week study that prepares people to re-introduce class meetings in their local church, even if another name (like "Grace Groups") is used. Complete information is online at www.ChristianConnexion.com.

Remember the Creed!

Several months ago Bishop James R. King, Jr. appealed to the United Methodists of the South Georgia Conference to remember the Apostles' Creed. He expressed concern that many congregations, in an attempt to reach a new generation of seekers, are eliminating some very important parts of worship. He urged United Methodists to explain over and over to every newcomer and every generation the core values of the faith. (For the full text of Bishop King's remarks, go to The Confessing Movement website—www.confessingumc.org)

**The Confessing Movement
within The United Methodist Church**

7995 East 21st Street
Indianapolis, IN 46219
(317) 356-9729

Fax: (317) 356-9742

Web site: www.confessingumc.org

E-mail: cm@confessingumc.org

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

MAILED FROM ZIP CODE 52761

Purpose Statement

**Confessing Jesus Christ as Son, Savior, and Lord.
The Confessing Movement exists to enable
The United Methodist Church to retrieve its
classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as
disciples of Jesus Christ.**

Officers

Honorary Co-Chairmen

Maxie Dunnam
Tom Oden

President

Gregory McGarvey

1st Vice President

Larry Baird

2nd Vice President

Judy Graham

Secretary

David Jenkins

Treasurer

Tom Junk

Asst. Treasurer

Joe Kilpatrick

Editor,

We Confess

Bill Bouknight

Board of Directors

Turner Arant

Ryan Barnett

Larry Baird

James Buskirk

Bob Collins

Mary Daffin

Sam Daffin

Wendy Deichmann

Maxie Dunnam

Mickey Ellis

Ira Gallaway

June Parker Goldman

Judy Graham

David Jenkins

Tom Junk

Joe Kilpatrick

Charles Kyker

John Ed Mathison

Gregory McGarvey

Dan Moore

Joy Moore

Donna Schlitt

Jim Smith

David Stanley

Gregory Stover

Jeff Switzer

Phil Thrailkill

Stephen Wende

Steve Wood

Staff

Executive Director

Patricia L. Miller

Associate

Directors

Bill Bouknight

Riley Case

Secretary

Heather Catlow

Bette Grubaugh

Bookkeeper

Bonnie Petrow

Advisory Council: William Abraham, Frank Alegria, John Case, Buddy Cooper, Tom Dyer, Gail Harrelson, Godfrey Hubert, Diane Komp, Evelyn Laycock, Liz Meyer, Randell Mickler, Elizabeth Moreau, J. D. Phillips, Jeff Spiller, Budd Sprague, Harry Wood